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A PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN JAPAN ON LANGUAGE, TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper follows the path of my research into intuitions about language and linguistic knowledge as an English language teacher based in Australia in Japan. I describe how my curiosity about these intuitions grew out of an inability to reconcile the relevance of pedagogical research, applied linguistics, and linguistics with the day-to-day language tasks involved in English language teaching. This gravitated toward an interest in judgment about natural language and the revision of anomalous sentences created naturally or with the assistance of machine translation. I note that teachers and learners generally adopt an intuitive and pragmatic approach to text judgment, commentary about text and text reformulation. I hope to engage readers from other cultures and education backgrounds, so that we share our perspectives, experiences and assumptions about tacit knowledge or intuitions about language.

Keywords: Tacit knowledge, implicit knowledge, procedural knowledge explicit knowledge, declarative knowledge

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This is not a traditional research paper. It is a narrative about my research and muse as a language teacher and much of it relates to how we use language and our intuitions about language in a pedagogical context. Throughout the paper, I suggest that "intuition" is a problematic term and that unfortunately, no alternative terms are viable because no single description of linguistic knowledge, with clear roles for conscious or unconscious knowledge domains, has been universally accepted. Thus there are few facts that can be generalizable for language teaching and learning at a practical level. I suggest that this will be the case until the underlying mechanisms involved in the production and interpretation of natural language are discovered.

Following the introduction, the second part presents my rationale to pursue intuitions about the language. In the third part, I go back in time and refer to a "disconnect" between my experiences in the classroom and my studies in language and education. In the fourth section I explain how I abandoned my initial pursuit of pedagogic intuitions and began to research language intuitions.

2.0 PART ONE: WHAT ARE INTUITIONS IN RESPECT TO LANGUAGE?

The concept of intuition is controversial in linguistics (Devitt, 2006; Lau, Clark, & Lappin, 2017). However, in common parlance, most people have no problem concluding that they can use at least one language, for want of a better word, intuitively. As teachers of foreign languages, we may also agree that we make spontaneous or intuitive decisions about language that can be reflected in immediate language judgments about linguistic performances. Compared to the rest of the population, language professionals do a lot of this. Odlin (1994) states,

> *Teachers use their intuitions about the target language to provide goals for students and to evaluate student performance. Learners have their own intuitions about what does and does not belong to the target language, and changes in such intuitions reflect, however obliquely, their developing competence in the target language (p. 271).*

The use of intuitions about language in language learning and teaching goes beyond general assessments of competency and down to the assessment of individual strings of text, including our own, particularly when editing or reforming anomalous text. People in general know what sounds 'natural' but teachers and learners are more likely to need some deliberate introspection when they assess text for 'naturalness' (Papineni et al., 2002).

This can happen with or without access to a source text (Nitzke, 2016). As observers of learners and for those of us trying to learn a foreign language foreign, we notice that these can also apply to second or other languages we use less well.

These types of intuitions, where language is assessed for typicality or for the presence of anomalous features may be called 'passive intuitions'. Where we actually produce text, such as when 'unnatural' text is edited and reformed, one might say that 'productive intuitions' are employed. This could also apply to simplifying text, such as when graded readers are created from literature classics.

Wong's (2008) simple definition of language intuition should make sense to any language teacher. It maybe colloquial but it reflects the practical perspective we live in as teachers and is universal in its nature.

Language intuition includes three abilities,

1. Judge whether a language unit is appropriate
2. Locate which part of a language unit is not appropriate
3. Correct the inappropriate unit

(Wong, 2008, p. 281).

2.1 Why bother researching this intuition?

Most people find these phenomena unremarkable, and suggest we could do away with the term "intuition" altogether, because we are simply drawing upon a shared tacit knowledge of the

target language and this knowledge is organized and rule-governed. Fast and consistent results, at least in terms of first or mother tongue language could be expected.

However, taking a closer look, we find that it is not so easy, and our responses can be inconsistent when identical text is given to different speakers with same knowledge (i.e. the same mother tongue, similar experiences, education etc.) They can also be inconsistent in respect to self-variation. This refers to the way we change our minds through successive attempts to judge, edit or reform one piece of text.

We could say that some subjectivity exists and that from moment-to-moment, levels of confidence can vary. It also suggests that perspective and knowledge conspire to produce results that are relative or probabilistic. I suggest that we eventually reach the same conclusions as Gleitman and Gleitman (1979),

> *It always turns out that giving language judgments – retrieving and making use of one's intuitions – is relatively hard, compared to talking and understanding (p. 101).*

As this paper will suggest, I gradually became more and more intrigued about as to why these difficulties were not addressed in pedagogical literature. Even now, few texts available to teachers in training or studying applied linguistics critically examine the subjectivity of our perception in respect to accessing our knowledge. This also applies to texts specifically addressing 'language awareness' (Andrews, 2007).

It seemed like an omission to me, because apart from the challenging nature of the task in practical terms and the concepts involved, I believed that teachers were underselling their skills and thus undermining their capacity to represent their profession. Moreover, I believe that our ability to maneuver through this subjectivity is greatly valued by our learners. In other words, our learners desire access to our intuitions while acknowledging the fallibility of our judgments, comments and reforms.

2.2 Obstacles to using the term "intuition"

Firstly, "intuition" is an unscientific term that is reductionist. One can argue that a term akin to 'black box' would suffice, as it portends to none of meta-physical allusions associated with intuition. On the other hand, if one uses the term to describe 'yet unknown', much like ancient navigators once described the areas denoted on maps that had not been documented, one could be accused of being vague and avoiding the questions a potential reader was invited to read about. Cosmides and Tooby (1994) state that,

> *Cognitive psychology has the opportunity to turn itself into a theoretically rigorous discipline…this cannot happen, however, as long as intuition and folk psychology continue to set our research agenda. This is because intuition systematically blinds us from the realities within cognition and the myriad of problems our brains spontaneously resolve (p. 69).*

Secondly and conversely, intuition is fully accepted and strongly associated to a controversial but still significant part of the partisan linguistic world – namely Chomskian linguistics. We do not need to know much about linguistics to know that these divisions in linguistics spell 'avoid' if we wish to get along professionally in the politically conscious world of academic institutions.

In some branches of linguistics, particularly in the 'connectionist', usage-based or empirical variety, the word raises suspicions, especially if it alludes to a capacity to judge language based on something more than exposure or suggests our judgments are based on as an innate mental faculty. This is more the pity for me, because I am perfectly satisfied to work with this "superficiality" and it is with those connectionist models that are entirely usage-based that I suspect teachers can relate to.

Thirdly, intuition is a politically sensitive word, because it is associated and used with the term, 'native', as in 'native intuition'. It could ignite controversies about "native speakerism" and incite needless and potentially unrewarding discussions about target language 'ability' or 'competence'.

2.3 Response to objections

Reluctant to use the word intuition I began to pay attention to concepts like implicit or procedural knowledge, tacit knowledge, and teacher cognition (Ellis, 2009; Paradis, 2004; Gutierrez, 2013; Andrews, 2007). These terms are more familiar and accepted in the lexicon of research in Applied Linguistics. However, these terms have also been variously defined in relation to one another, and are open to the same relativity as 'intuition'.

My position today is tempered but my response to this conundrum was crude. I agreed with Cosmides and Tooby (1994) but found no alternative term to intuition, so I qualified my use of the word so it would be used strictly in a casual or colloquial sense. I thought that intuition offered an agnostic posture and was most likely to attract the attention of language teachers without fear that they would be dragged into a scientific debate.

As for the sensitivity regarding 'native speakerism' I believed it wouldn't be taken seriously enough because intuitions can be "wrong" and learners clearly have intuitions about the foreign language they are learning. It only takes a moment to notice even beginner-level learners attempting to spontaneously edit machine translation when doing assignments or tasks involving writing. To postulate that non-native foreign language teachers do not have intuitions about the target forms is absurd and I estimated that no teacher having spent a day at a language school with non-native teachers would think otherwise.

In short, intuition is a nebulous kind of thing that defies definition, but contrary to the edict that one must define terms before discussing them, it was the very impossibility of defining intuition itself, that appealed to me as a natural starting point of enquiry, especially if it were qualified a casual sense. Moreover, it seemed to be a natural and justifiable way of dealing with a striking fact (and a consequence of that fact), that we still do not universally understand or accept enough about language itself.

In the next section, I will go back in time, and describe how my experiences drew me towards an interest in these matters.

3.0 THEORY, RESEARCH AND (ACTUAL) LANGUAGE TEACHING: MY EXPERIENCE

In this section, I discuss some of common theories about language and language education that predominate the culture I was educated in. These were the sorts of themes and theories language teachers and educationalists were likely to come across in pre-service teacher training or post-

graduate studies if they, like me, were educated in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, Second-Language Acquisition in Australia through the 1990s and early 2000s. I suggest that if these people continued their career in language teaching, they might experience a further "disconnect" between theory and practice.

3.1 First Steps in Teacher Education

I began my teacher education in 1994 taking a TESOL (teaching English as a Second or Other Language) teaching method in a post-graduate high school teaching diploma course in Melbourne, Australia. This is the standard and official means of qualification for all registered high school teachers in the state of Victoria, Australia. At that time, I had no experience in schools or learning institutions other than six months in a Japanese conversation school.

The pedagogic texts suggested that teaching pedagogy had progressed along an arc throughout the twentieth century that reflected the prevailing trends in educational philosophy. Some of the latter were structuralism, behaviorism or constructivism and socio-cultural theory. These were presented in distinct stages with titles such as, 'Grammar Translation', 'The Direct Method', or the 'Audio-Visual Approach' and culminated at in a fuzzy but seemingly universally accepted method named simply, 'The Communicative Approach' somewhere in the 1970s. Other methods were added to augment this narrative and these included approaches such as; 'Functional-Notional', 'Suggestopedia', 'The Silent Approach', the Lexical Approach', PPP (Present-Practice-Produce), 'Community Learning' and 'Task-Based Learning'.

I had no trouble accepting this 'received meta-narrative' or so-called "principles" of teaching second or other languages'. The 'Communicative Approach' appealed to me because it potentially reduced learners' exposure to a teacher's (and hence my own) lack of metalinguistic knowledge. It also emphasized a co-operative learning modality by de-emphasizing the role of the teacher to create and deliver all content, which shifted a degree of responsibility and accountability to the learners. I accepted the role of teacher more as a "mentor" than "instructor", but I did not appreciate the practicalities of language mentoring. I had not been exposed to the atypical use of the target language.

3.2 Adapting to Reality

Whilst having a post-graduate qualification in TESOL gave me a certain sense of confidence in so far as the way I saw the prospects for employment, actual employment left me feeling unprepared. On the second day, I rushed into a city store to buy a copy of the 1989 edition of Geoffrey Leech's (1989) "A-Z of English Grammar". I had noticed how my students could not use articles ('the', 'a' or simply neither before noun phrases) and only now, did I recognize the chasm that existed in our arrangement because I had no explicit knowledge to guide them. I adopted a crude coping mechanism – whereby I would rehearse hypothetical phrases hoping to extract a general or makeshift rule – it hopelessly inadequate and unreliable. I also realized that feedback predicated and concluded with a notion, 'It just doesn't sound right' was also inadequate.

At any stage in my first year of teaching I could have mused, 'Where did pre-service training apply?' It seemed I had learned what not to do (practise, repetition, grammar drills etc.) but little about what I would do that made sense economically, in so far as preparation

time, class management and reasonable assessment would allow. I could, in theory, ignore grammar and translation because 'grammar-translation' was old-fashioned. I could ignore drills, practice or repetition because the 'Audio-Lingual method' was from the 1940s and suggested 'behaviorism' which had been discredited by Chomsky.

Corrective feedback was not something I had studied, perhaps because it was too 'negative' or smelt of 'prescriptivism' and this was a form of "false authority". It was in this vacuum that I had no reason to believe or positive evidence to suggest that the principles I had studied in pre-service training – or indeed in language pedagogical texts - applied in day-to-day teaching. Perhaps one caveat to this was that I had no reluctance to accept that students, at some undetermined stage in their development, needed to have opportunities to communicate meaningfully.

A positive consequence of this freedom and lack of structure allowed my muse to run unrestricted and hence the seeds of my curiosity about pedagogic intuitions began to grow. I suspected that at a fundamental level, I did not know anything more about how languages ought to be taught than a layman, or if I did, there would be no means to empirically support it. It was also beginning to occur to me that if my colleagues knew anything about this, they kept their thoughts about it very private.

3.3 Adaption Strategy: Copy – Intuit - Calibrate

Survival instinct is triggered quickly when one is grasping for certainty and I think a kind of pragmatism suggested that I employ a mode of operation akin to a "Copy-Intuit-Calibrate" approach. This became the de facto 'principle' for language teaching for a few years.

To a certain degree, I am certain that this copy-intuit-calibrate edict broadly applies to language teaching, especially in an institutional context. For me, the "copying" mostly meant following the rubric set by others - choosing the kinds of textbooks my colleagues chose for the respective programs we were assigned to, and moving through the exercises in linear fashion as suggested by the flow of material.

The "intuit" part of the scheme came down to how I would rely on my intuitions to respond and manage the language material, both from the models and examples from the texts and the more spontaneous or incidental language generated by the learners in class-time or in homework correction.

Although I had quickly realized become that my metacognition about language was unreliable (McCrostie, 2007; Ashcroft, 2010), I became aware that my productive and passive intuitions, i.e. the natural ability to process fluent sounding sentences and judge those that were not fluent was metaphorically, the 'workhorse' and the primary way of disseminating my linguistic knowledge to learners.

The "calibrate" part of the scheme describes how I would consciously and unconsciously attempt to relate and compare my own responses and experiences with other teachers' class experiences to make sure I was operating within the bounds of what we might call 'normal' or 'acceptable'.

In some ways, this functioned like a kind of ongoing and informal peer-review and could be actuated through small talk in the staff room or in meetings. Again, not withstanding

competitive pressures and political survival, class evaluation scores were also noted as unsolicited feedback from students about other teachers' classes.

However important these outward or superficial factors might be, I began to value the incidental learning processes in lessons and I began to sense that they lay at the heart of valuable and worthy 'teaching'. At one point, I believed it was of equal if not of more value than whatever primary material was used as the assigned text.

Later, I would appreciate that the learners' ability to benefit from such incidental learning was due in no small part to the learners' former (and most likely more formal) learning of English. Moreover, the prior learning happened in paradigms I had not learned about enough to appreciate in my post-graduate studies and really highlighted the cultural-centric framework of my perspective. Many years later I came to realize through learner interviews, that many techniques that could be described as deliberate, focused and formal– including drills – were relevant to even the most advanced and successful learners I was teaching.

I will not extend this discussion about early teaching experiences and the relevance of training other than to say that it was difficult to accept that the latter was necessary in a technical sense – especially in respect to my lack of knowledge about language. It did however, allow me to open the classroom to an arrangement I felt comfortable with, which in turn allowed my muse about language to flourish. The students' apparent willingness to participate in these arrangements offered me some tacit and moral affirmation for continuing with them.

3.4 Pragmatism and More Education

When I passed through a Masters of Education in the late 1990s I had already taught English for several years. This included teaching ESP (English for Specific Purposes), Migrant English programs, CALL, short-term vocational courses, conversation schools, high school TESOL classes. I had taught in both in Australia and Japan. I had also begun to study Japanese and I had become a casual observer of successful foreign language learners. I realized that I had initially taken the idealizations of teaching far too seriously in terms of their application to daily teaching practice.

Nevertheless, the gaps between the purported currency of Applied Linguistics, its terms and tidy constructs and the 'rough and ready' nature of teaching practice were now as gaping and obvious as ever. Whilst one could study one aspect of one branch of linguistics and apply them to one or more aspects of the teaching or language as one saw it, there were no means to reduce or generalize across these branches and so one could easily violate some of the assumptions of an approach when 'borrowing' from it.

The widespread but unspoken assumption among teachers appeared to be that linguistics (along with Applied Linguistics or TESOL studies) was unusable for any practical purpose in relation to the practical nature of teaching in an economic way, but paradoxically, it was an extremely profitable enterprise in terms of securing employment in an institution.

It became easier to understand why teachers, material makers and learners continued with the terms of a grammatical paradigm, ignored by modern linguistics, and largely unchanged from the 19th century. It was an interesting and telling observation that reinforced the edict of my early years, "be realistic and intuitively adapt". Whether or not grammar needed to be taught at all, (and that this matter seemed to be entirely in the hands of teachers themselves),

was a question that encapsulated this arbitrary bearing of ones 'compass' and our agnostic relationship to theory.

I began to see four isolated domains of cognition about language education operating independently of each other. One concerned we go about learning a foreign language as opposed to how we teach it. Another referred to how we go about teaching a foreign language in an institutionalized environment as opposed to how we teach it informally. A third contrasted how we participate in discourse about how we should teach a foreign language and how they actually taught it. Finally, a fourth referred to how we participate in discourse about teaching in formal recognized publications and conferences and how this could be contrasted to how we identify ourselves and our problems and challenges in informal web-based blogs, youtube videos and across social media.

3.5 Acceptance and Moving On

There are good reasons for these inconsistencies when talking about learning and teaching languages. It is important not to draw overplay cynical or nihilistic conclusions about the disconnect between theory and practice, because although a certain social and economic pragmatism plays its hand, it is important to remember that these dynamics reflect the real-world realities we may not be able to change. Moreover they present freedom and opportunities. I became more interested in a positive response and adaption to their consequences.

3.6 The Publish or Perish Imperative

However, in the meantime, the 'copy-intuit-calibrate' edict prevailed. Having graduated from a Masters course and gaining employment in a university, I was forced, quite unprepared, merely by the need to remain gainfully employed, to write papers about language education.

When I chose to write a paper about Task-based Language teaching (TBLT) in 2005, I knew tasks were ubiquitous features of our classes and yet TLBT, as an approach or modality, and as proposed in the literature, was not employed in so far as being a principle and consciously chosen modality of instruction. I assumed I knew it would not be employed, and I assumed I knew the reasons why it would not be employed. I also knew that TLBT was a growing industry within the industry that is "pedagogy" and saw it as wise option for a reluctant 'researcher'. I dutifully read up on what I believed to be the requisite texts.

However, it was after all this reading and consideration of the literature review for this paper, I stepped away from this detached and pragmatic position. Whilst TLBT was purported to be 'new' (although being discussed in literature for over 25 years with little if any penetration into classrooms I had seen) I decided to argue that if we accepted that tasks were already used in classes without the formal prescriptions proposed in literature, the TLBT project would only benefit if it sought out a way to elicit from teachers the 'intuitions' they had evolved from managing them over their entire careers.

A couple of years passed and again, the pressure to publish drove me in the direction of 'trends'. I decided to review computer-assisted learning (CALL) and this lead to a paper about teachers' preferences for using CALL vs standard classrooms. Again I was compelled to reflect on pedagogic intuitions, as teacher cognitions about this seemed to be outside any domains of the theory they were exposed to.

However, ultimately it was this pragmatism that put an end to my quest to uncover the motivations and sources of pedagogic intuitions. I could no longer pretend that I was not aware that teachers could choose a CALL room because they 'like computers' or because they want to become more acquainted with 'technology' or for any particular reason or another. Moreover, I could not delineate what parts of their decisions or cognitions were pedagogically based. I noted that other decisions teachers made in the classroom could be similarly disassociated with language.

4.0 DEALING WITH LANGUAGE LEARNERS MEANS DEALING WITH LEARNERS' LANGUAGE

As I mentioned immediately above, I realized that Teacher Cognition and decision making rested on a myriad of factors that spread far beyond the domain of language teaching per se. My interest from that point became one in which must be focused strictly on the 'language part' of language teaching. This, I reasoned would make my research, no matter how meager and modest, at least indisputably "universal and relevant" to language teaching no matter the context or modality.

Initially, the use of language intuition in Corpus Linguistics as well as Chomsky's appeal to linguistic intuition, and its utility in the generative paradigm of linguistics encouraged me to speculate about its importance for language educators and practitioners. However, as suggested earlier, I did become apprehensive when the diversity of approaches to linguistics and the pluralistic way the term 'intuition' was used across these approaches became more obvious. However, unlike terms such as 'Implicit' or 'Procedural' knowledge, which have been defined as 'intuitive' and thus possible candidates to replace 'intuition' in pedagogical texts, were hopelessly (or so I thought) lost in relativity in the texts.

What is implicit or explicit and how or if they interact with memory, learning or each other in a cognitive or neurophysiological sense are of course crucial discussions (Paradis, 2004) but they can distract us from the tasks we go about 'intuitively' as teachers without any regard for these discussions or their consequences.

So again intuition seemed better than the alternative, which was to choose one version of the implicit-explicit story without access or understanding the science – if any existed - underpinning it. No amount of impressive brain scans showing distinct physical regions representing 'domains of knowledge' could convince me there was enough science at that time.

I became enthusiastic again as I reasoned that the scope of intuitive linguistic behavior for teachers is vast. I figured that all speakers use their intuitions about language to communicate and that there are numerous tasks that not only language teachers, but language practitioners of various kinds, such as translators, interpreters, editors, proof-readers and copywriters perform that require a sharp sense or nuanced self-awareness in respect to consciously and unconsciously editing the involuntary choices we make about language.

As I realized this, I concluded that I had turned my own complete circle and I was back to asking the original question – what can we attribute to the way we assess linguistic tokens from moment-to-moment, and why do these possesses reveal inconsistent results if language is ordered?

4.1 Why Choose Sentence Judgment and Reformulation?

Of all the tasks or actions that I supposed required a certain intuitive response, I chose sentence judgment and reformation for three key reasons. Firstly, it uses both passive (or receptive) intuitions and productive intuitions about language in the most direct and immediate sense. Secondly, it was because every teacher has to deal with it. This went some way to satisfying my thirst to closing the 'disconnect' I mentioned earlier. A third reason is because it produces explicit data which might serve as evidence in a theory that explains something about variation.

Finally, I was (perhaps falsely) optimistic that the complexities and mysteries about these underlying processes would be somewhere discussed if not explained, and that there would a small discourse community perhaps in some 'far off' place not immediately obvious to teachers and our common post-graduate readings lists. For a brief period, I even imagined that I could start one of my own.

4.1.1 The Dynamics

The process of evaluating sentences, isolating anomalous features and reforming texts involves both a conscious choice and a subconscious process where explicit text is perceived and somehow projected onto substrates of unseen text in the mind at some deeper level. Certain features of source text may trigger reactions from moment to moment and perception and cognition are not static. So on a second or third reading, different anomalies may appear. Distortions or re-interpretations of the meaning of the source text may also take place.

These performances and judgments reflect variations, and the variations in these results are striking, both from an inter-personal and intra-personal basis. Whilst ambiguity and redundancy (various ways to say the same thing) may account for some of the variations in this task, what really fascinated me was that the act of rendering these sentences could change one's semantic perspective about the text, in-situ.

4.1.2 Getting Data

I set out to explore this by collecting odd or anomalous sentences from my students and reforming them myself while noting the challenges and trade-offs involved (Wotley, 2014). I began to ask how other teachers examine such sentences and attempt to reform them whilst recording their responses in a process akin to 'think-aloud protocol'. Eye-tracking software (Nitzke, 2016) might yield important clues as to why people vary in their performances or why their judgments may be more or less stable. For this purpose, judgment and reforming tasks, untimed and timed, with or without source texts or other semantic cues could be used. I created games and quizzes that incentivized participants to "typicalize" anomalous sentences.

4.2 A note about reality and active research

I should end this section on a philosophical note. I have become more realistic with the years of experience I have spent teaching and reading about teaching. I know these ideas are pre-experimental. Without an active discourse community that delves into these sorts of questions, private action research projects go nowhere. To borrow a metaphor, there is a 'Bermuda Triangle' and it is through this triangle many teachers take their insights, ideas and experiences into retirement. The three points of this triangle can be described as thus.

Firstly, at the top there is Language Pedagogy, and as I have suggested, it is (for good reason) primarily concerned with 'idealizations' of teaching (i.e. task-based teaching). At the second point there is cognitive psychology and the mind, which also includes much of linguistics. As I have already mentioned, linguistics is fundamentally fractured. Not only is there little agreed about, there seems to be little incentive to sort out differences. So the divergence continues. For a teacher wanting to make generalizable comments about day-to-day teaching, it is a dilemma.

At the third is neuroscience, and here the physiological dimension is foremost. While the kinds of neuroscience accessible to non-scientists (i.e. most language teachers) is yielding us impressive pictures of brain waves and replete with distinct regions, it is has yet to have anything other than a superficial impact on the way the other corners of the triangle work or change the way teachers go about things.

To summarize this I believe that this quote from Radford (1988), a prominent transformational linguist, still holds validity.

> *We simply have no idea what neurophysical or psychological processes are involved in the act or creating sentences and it is absolutely pointless to speculate about them in our present state of knowledge (p. 132).*

In short, little exists to capture this kind of work on intuitions I was curious about and there is little political or economic incentive for this to change as far as I can see.

5.0 CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have suggested that we do not know or agree on very much about language. From my perspective and experience, most language teachers, like teachers of no other subject I am aware of, save for those in the arts, have to intuit our way through our professional practice. The most powerful translation tools rely on bits of human translations and still produce anomalies and errant strings. We have to rely on our intuitive interpretations to repair or reformulate this output. This process reveals a surprising level of variability and inconsistency and offers us a rich vein of research about language and its cognition.

However, intuition is a problematic concept. Few would disagree that intuitive control of language sits at the very core of an idealization of language competence and thus becomes the ultimate target in the minds of motivated learners, but few believe in a faculty called "intuition" per se and for anyone interested in pursuing cognition it is a conundrum.

Until we can agree on terms, my experience suggests to me that we will be essentially alone with our own private cognitions about language. They could be conscious or unconscious, detached or interconnected, complementary or contradictory. This being the case, the term intuition, with all its frustrating and nebular characteristics, will still hold currency on the edges of studies about learning and teaching languages.

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